

Fluoride and Drinking Water

Fluoride can help prevent tooth decay.

Fluoride is a naturally occurring substance found in some water supplies. Many Wisconsin communities add fluoride to public drinking water supplies that do not have enough naturally occurring fluoride.

The right amount of fluoride in drinking water can help prevent tooth decay by making teeth stronger. Many studies have shown that when fluoride is used properly, it is safe and effective in reducing tooth decay.

Fluoride may not be found in well water or bottled water. Water in private wells can be tested for fluoride. Unless the amount of fluoride is printed on the label of bottled water, don't assume it contains enough fluoride to prevent tooth decay. You may need to check with the distributor to obtain this information.

Does your water supply have the right amount of fluoride? Contact your health department or the State Laboratory of Hygiene (1-800-442-4618) about testing water from private wells and/or fluoride in your community water supply.



Other sources of fluoride

Fluoride supplements are available by prescription for children who do not have access to water with the right amount of fluoride. Most toothpastes and some mouthrinses also contain fluoride. Fluoride varnishes and tooth gels are applied to the enamel surface of the teeth to prevent tooth decay in primary and permanent teeth.

Tips for Healthy Teeth and Beautiful Smiles!

- **Discuss fluoride and your child's water sources with your health care provider** to find out if fluoride supplements are needed.
- **Supervise your children's tooth brushing habits.** After age two begin using only a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Assure children are brushing thoroughly and not swallowing toothpastes and mouthrinses.



- **Brush your teeth twice daily.** Also recommended are flossing daily, regular dental checkups, and having your children evaluated for dental sealants.
- **Choose or offer healthy meals and snacks** at regular times and not all day long to help keep your family's teeth healthy. Offer milk, juice, or water at meal and snack times. For thirst, offer water instead of juice or sugary drinks. Limit the use of bottles and training cups between meals.

Adapted from the Wisconsin Oral Health Program Facts Sheets. The information provided on this card is intended for parents and caregivers of children 6 months-18 years of age. For more information about fluoride and cavity prevention contact your dentist or physician. Additional information is also available by calling the Oral Health Program (608) 266-5152 or (608) 266-3201. Visit the website at: http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/health/Oral_Health/